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S E R M O N,

PREACHED AT

Orange-Street Chapel, Leicester-Fields,

On SUNDAY the 26th of AUGUST, 1787;

Occasioned by the much lamented Death

OF THE

REV. HENRY PECKWELL, D. D.

Rector of BLOXHAM, in Lincolnshire, and Chaplain
to the Most Honourable the Marchioness
Dowager of LOTHIAN.

By JOHN TOWNSEND,
MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL.

He was a burning and shining Light.

CHRIST.

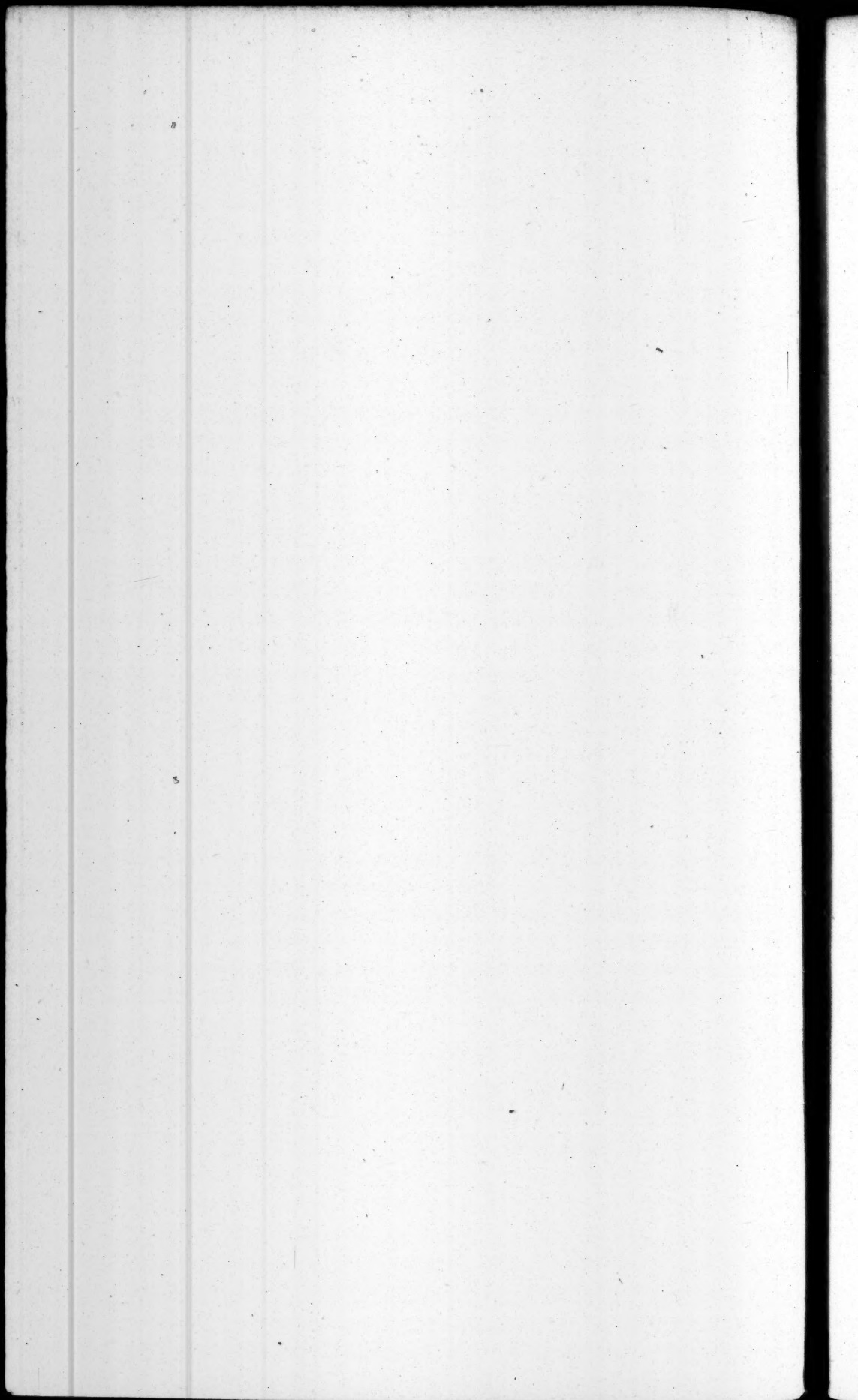
The Memory of the Just is blessed.

SOLOMON.

(PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.)

L O N D O N:

PRINTED BY L. WAYLAND; AND SOLD BY J. MATTHEWS,
STRAND; H. TRAPP, NO. 1, PATER-NOSTER-ROW;
T. SCOLLIICK, CITY-ROAD; W. ASH, LITTLE
TOWER-STREET; AND T. CAHUSAC,
READING, BERKS. 1787.



T O T H E

GENTLEMEN in Trust for the CHAPEL in Orange-Street, Leicester-Fields.

G E N T L E M E N,

*I*T was not only by your desire the following Discourse was preached, as a token of respect to the memory of a man, universally and justly esteemed in all the churches; but it is now likewise, at your earnest solicitation, presented to more public view. —The common apology, “published by request,” has long been considered as a refuge, to which the Authors of Sermons resort, to screen themselves from the severity of criticism. Many have adapted it, who, in this respect, needed it much less than myself: but few have done it with more sincerity or truth; for the writing and publishing Sermons, is a work for which, I sincerely profess, I have neither ability, inclination, or leisure; and the doing of it, in the

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present instance, is sacrificing my own judgment, and feelings, to your importunity. The Sermon was not only according to my constant practice, delivered extempore, but it was nearly so in the arrangement of it; for the removal of a tender and affectionate Parent, by death, together with some incidental circumstances which attended it, broke in so much upon my usual time of retirement in the preceding week, as to leave but a few hours for the study of three discourses which I had to preach on the ensuing Sabbath.—

However, in compliance with your wishes, I have done my best to recover the leading ideas, to place them in the same succession, and, as near as possible, to express them in the same words. I am aware that had it passed under the examination of any gentleman, possessing the advantage of human acquirements; it might have appeared in a far superior dress: but then every improvement it received, would have rendered it less like the original. Considering this, and thinking your esteem and partiality for the Author, would lead you to treat it candidly, I determined to send it to the press (imperfect as it is, both in matter and composition) from under my own hand. If the preaching of it has in any measure (as you hint) been useful, I desire to give the praise to Him who has put this treasure into
earthen

earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may appear to be of God, and not of us. That the reading of it may be attended with a divine blessing, is the prayer of,

Gentlemen,

Your sincere Friend,

And ready Servant

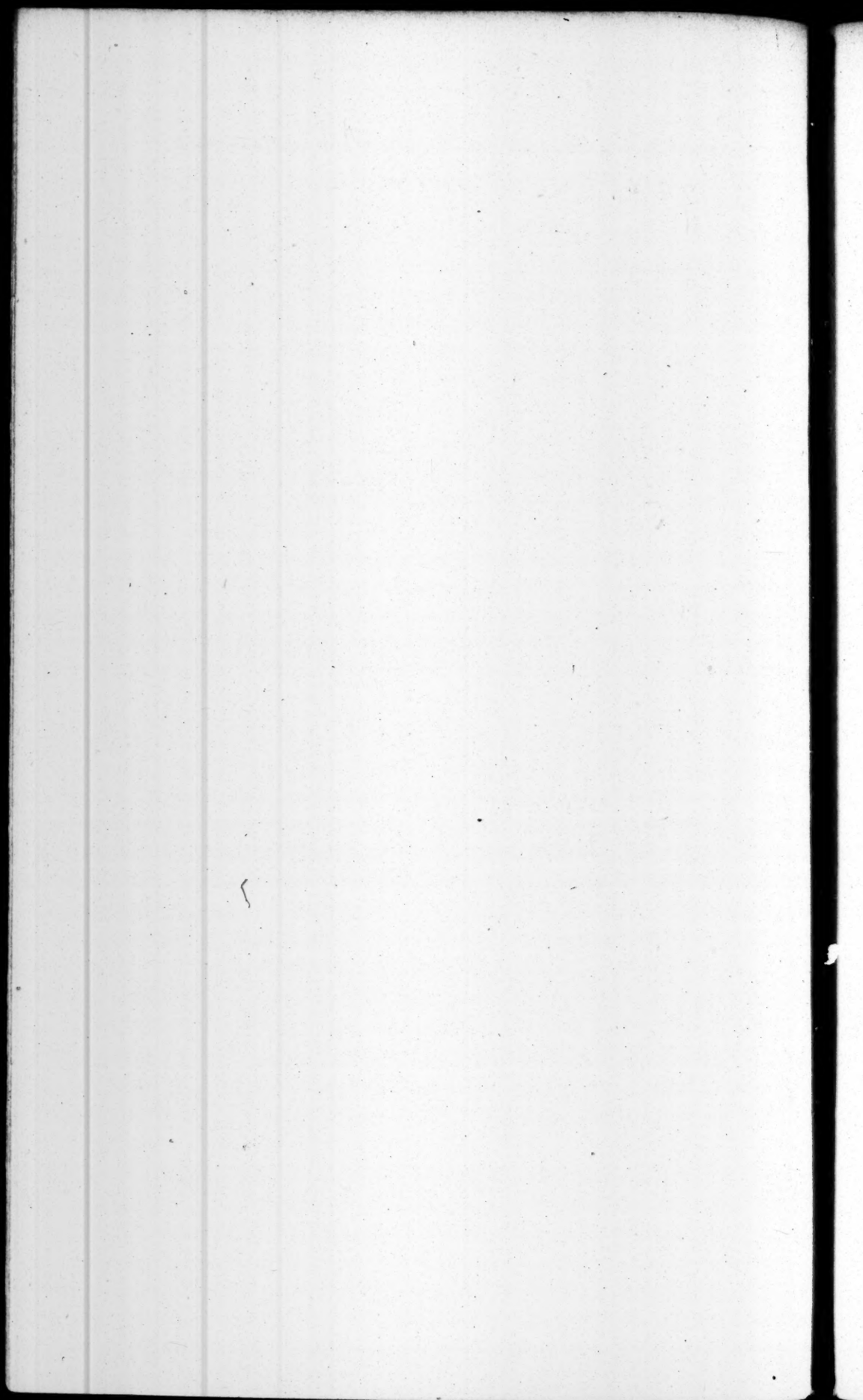
In the Gospel,

JOHN TOWNSEND.

Jamaica-Row, Rotherhithe-Road,

Sept. 7, 1787.

A SER-



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S E R M O N, &c.

2 S A M U E L iii. 38.

*And the king said unto his servants, Know ye not,
that there is a prince and a great man fallen
this day in Israel?*

THE sin and disobedience of Saul, laid the foundation of his rejection from being king over Israel; and the Lord expressly names David as his successor. But though he has the crown promised him, and is accordingly anointed by the Prophet of the Lord, yet he was not put into the immediate possession thereof, nor did he take any indirect steps to obtain it; but chose to abide the ordinary course of God's providence; well knowing, that whatever God purposes or promises to his people, is so sure, that they may
confidently

confidently believe, and patiently wait for its accomplishment, without fear of being disappointed. The circumstances which attended David after his being anointed king, afforded, to outward appearance, very little probability of his ever being comfortably settled on the throne of Israel. But that God, who works his sovereign will and pleasure by the very means which seem to oppose them, gradually moved every hindrance out of the way. Saul and Jonathan are slain in battle; and Mephibosheth, to whom the natural right of succession descended, having no disposition to dispute God's appointment, puts in no claim. Thus the way is clearly opened to David by the providence of God. He, therefore, now enquires of the Lord, saying, *Shall I go up to any of the cities of Judah?* And the Lord says, Go up to Hebron; which he accordingly did, and was there anointed king by the house of Judah. Those transactions of ours upon which we ask the Lord's counsel, and in which we follow his directions, cannot fail of being prosperous in the end.

While these things were transacting in Hebron, Abner was exerting all his influence in Israel for the house of his old master; and, accordingly, he sets up Ishbosheth a son of Saul in his father's stead; which, of course, lays the foundation of a bloody war between the houses of Judah and Israel. Among other incidents which
happened

happened in this unhappy conflict, was that of Abner killing Afahel, Joab's brother, who had pursued after him with an intention either to kill or take him prisoner, well knowing his importance in this contest.

The struggle between the houses of Saul and David lasted long: but the latter was every day waxing *stronger and stronger*, when a circumstance took place which brought the matter to a speedy and favourable issue. Ishbosheth was offended either with some real or supposed misconduct of Abner, and accordingly reproached him with it; which gave him not only a temporary disgust, but so alienated his heart from him, that he determined to abandon his cause, and espouse that of David. So uncertain is the friendship of men, and so slight are the occasions by which they may become our greatest enemies! Abner does not seem to have been allied to the house or interest of Saul, so much by any ties of conscience, as by some outward considerations; and therefore is easily separated from them; and when separated, he soon finds some plausible pretence to colour his defection: nothing less than this, *The Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of my servant David I will save my people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.* When the authority of God is

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clearly

clearly against our inclinations, we profess ignorance of it ; but when it falls in with them, we are desirous it should be thought we are acting under its influences, when perhaps, in both cases, we are governed by self-will and self-interest.

Abner, having avowed his intention of bringing back all Israel to the interest of David, goes to Hebron, for the purpose of concerting measures to this end. The king, being well satisfied with the man and his errand, received him kindly, and sent him away in peace. Joab, on his return to court, was no sooner informed of this, than he expressed his anger, and had the audacity even to chide his master for having sent Abner away in peace, and immediately sends for him back ; when, under pretence of speaking with him in private, he murdered him with his own hand. In this transaction, there is reason to think Joab was instigated by those two diabolic passions, *revenge* and *envy* : by the former, because Abner had slain his brother Afahel ; and by the latter, thinking that if he was restored to the king's favour, he might in time become his rival. How true is that word of Solomon's, *Better is he that ruleth his own spirit than he that taketh a city !* The deed was of too dark and criminal a nature to be long concealed ; consequently, was soon reported to David ;

David; who avows his own ignorance of it, attends his burial in person; mourns for him with unfeigned grief, and addresses his courtiers in the language of my text, *Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day in Israel?*

It is impossible to consider the temper and conduct of David in this affair, but with admiration. Abner had appeared hostile to the views and interest of David, and had been the chief instrument in drawing all Israel after Ishbosheth; and yet now that he falls, instead of esteeming it matter of triumph, or viewing it as a judgment upon him for any personal opposition to him, he considers it as matter of grief and lamentation. The language of David, on this occasion, shews the honourable sentiments he entertained of Abner, and the particular esteem and friendship he had for him: yea, it shews the patriotism of the King of Israel, who mourned for him because he considered him as a loss to the community at large. How unlike David are those wretched beings, whose revengeful hearts will forgive no wrongs; and whose jaundiced eyes can discern no merit in any that are not of their party, and who either thwart their wishes, or contradict their opinions!

David could not adapt this language of Abner with more truth or propriety, than we can in the best sense of this servant of the Lord; for he was a truly GREAT MAN, and his death is just cause of lamentation.

By a great man we do not understand merely a *rich* man; for many of those who have large possessions, and much wealth, are so far from meriting such a character, that they deserve, and are justly held in, the greatest contempt possible. 'Tis true, God hath given them much, and from them much might be expected: but, alas! they, instead of being faithful stewards of the manifold goodness of God, instead of dealing out their bread to the hungry and the wretched, instead of making the hearts of the widow, the fatherless, and the afflicted to sing for joy; in the room, I say, of doing all this, which should be their meat and drink, they are living to themselves, they are shutting up the bowels of their compassion; nay more, they are keeping back the hire of the labourer, and grinding the face of the poor. These are they whose *riches are corrupted*; and whose *gold and silver are cankered*; the *rust* whereof shall *witness against them*. They are neither *rich in good works*, nor *rich towards God*; and though they *have made themselves rich*, yet they *have nothing*, because they have not the *blessing of the Lord which maketh rich, and addeth no sorrow*.

Again,

Again, by a great man we do not mean one whose name is followed by a long list of dignified titles. These of themselves are empty, insignificant things; they confer no greatness of soul, nor do they command the smallest degree of attention or respect, from any but the ignorant and the vulgar, unless they are attended by actions which in some measure comport with them. In short, he that cannot with some degree of justice be called a wise and good man, let his titles be what they may, is no object of envy on the one hand, nor has he any claim to our esteem or commendation on the other.

Once more, by a great man we are far from meaning a man who only fills some eminent or exalted *post* in public life, whether it be civil or ecclesiastic; for it is no uncommon thing to see some of the first and most important stations in life, filled with men who can lay no claim to them by their merit, who possess no capacity to fill them, and who shew no fidelity or zeal in discharging the duties thereof. Now such men as these, who are placed in eminent situations, and who are not found filling them with wisdom and integrity; so far are they from being esteemed great men, that their exaltation renders their folly the more conspicuous, and subjects them to the greater degree of contempt. We might say
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the same of the warrior's exploits, the philosopher's wisdom, and the physician's skill, (considering them abstractedly) that we have said of the rich man's wealth, and the honourable man's titles; but we must not enlarge here, lest we should be diverted from the more important reflections which our subject affords. Now though we have affirmed, that neither riches nor honourable stations, &c. can of themselves constitute this character; yet he who possesses the grace of God in conjunction with these, and is thereby helped to use the former, and fill up the latter, to the glory of God—1 Cor. xii. 31—and the good of mankind—Gal. vi. 10—he is the person who has a claim to the title of a *great man*. And we are bold to say, without any fear of being convicted of injustice, such was the man (though of like passions with ourselves) to whose memory we are this morning paying a tribute of respect: such was the man that is fallen in our Israel; fallen in a way as striking in itself, as it is affecting in its influence through the whole and extensive circle of his friends and acquaintance.

Dr. PECKWELL had, in my judgment, a well-founded claim to the character in my text, as a Man, a Christian, and a Minister. As a *Man*, he possessed a very capacious and inquisitive mind, a clear and well-informed understanding. His
feelings

feelings were tender and sympathetic; which enabled him to fill up every relative station in life with admirable advantage, and induced him to form and help forward liberal plans to alleviate the wretchedness, and remove the burdens, of such of his fellow-creatures as were overwhelmed with poverty and disease*.

As a *Christian*, his understanding was enlightened into a saving knowledge of all the more important and essential truths of revealed religion. His heart was deeply impressed by, and had a powerful and sweet experience of those things of which his understanding had so clear a perception. And to crown the whole, his deportment,

* He gave very evident proof of this truth, by the indefatigable zeal he manifested in labouring to promote the views of a Society known by the name of "*The Sick Man's Friend*," instituted for the purpose of *relieving* and *instructing* the indigent sick. And it appears, that his diligent application to the study of physic and surgery, of late, was not so much from his partiality to them (much less any interested views), as from a desire of enlarging the utility of that Institution by establishing a Dispensary, in which he meant to have taken an active part; and he had proceeded so far in the prosecution of this plan, as to take an apartment in Rathbone-Place, and had actually laid in some medicines. Considering these things, he not only appears to have been censured *rashly* and *unjustly*; but, on the contrary, he merited the highest commendation, and actually died in no less a cause than that of imitating the good Samaritan, Luke x. 33.

conversation, and conduct, in public and private life, served to demonstrate he was not one of those *who profess to know God, but in works deny him.*

As a *Preacher*, his very person and voice commanded outward attention and respect. His manly and pleasing eloquence charmed the most refined ear: the strength and energy of his reasoning carried conviction to the mind of the most confident gainsayer. In the manner of his expressing himself, he followed the maxim of Paul, *using gravity and soundness of speech, that cannot be condemned.* In his disposition he was liberal and candid: he became all things to all men, in the best meaning of that expression, that he might win souls to Jesus Christ, and that the truth might not be hindered*.

The manner in which he opened and prosecuted theological subjects, was pleasing beyond conception. His Sermons were a kind of Essay upon the portion of Scripture to which Provi-

* I remember an instance of his candour, which occurred some years ago, at the Chapel in the Broad Way, Westminster; where meeting with a person that he apprehended had some scruples about receiving the Lord's Supper kneeling, he readily offered to administer it to her sitting; by which it was plain, he preferred Christian charity to the authority and practice of the Established Church.

dence

dence had directed his attention. But then they did not consist of loose declamation; for though there was seldom any *formal division* of his subject, yet his Sermons generally consisted of eight or ten well-chosen ideas; the arrangement and connexion of which demonstrated the soundness of the Preacher's judgment, and the close application he had given to his subject.

But what exceeded, and was of much greater importance in his character as a Minister, was, that the word preached by him came with power, and with the demonstration of the Holy Ghost; so that his labours were instrumental in the conversion, comfort, and establishment of immortal souls. Many of you have had frequent opportunities of proving the truth of this reflection; but none of you, my dear hearers, can be under greater obligations to the grace of God, through his instrumentality, than the man who is now addressing you; who was awakened, and brought to an experimental acquaintance with the things of God, under his preaching*.

But

* In the relation of this circumstance, the Author found himself so affected, as to be unable to deliver the few remaining ideas he intended to drop concerning the Doctor's latter end; and so passed on rather abruptly to the remainder of his subject: And as what was then *unintentionally* omitted, is well known by
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But we proceed now to some improvement of this solemn providence to ourselves; in doing which, I shall,

First, lead your thoughts to the subject of death. Every instance of mortality that happens within our hearing, is a preacher to us; but those that occur more immediately within the circle of our own friends and acquaintance speak louder, and, with a more emphatic tone of voice, seem to say, *Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.* There is no subject that can challenge our attention, which is of more importance than death, which is every day hastening nearer. May we be enabled, this morning, to view it with all possible seriousness! well knowing, that as sure as one and another of our friends are passing into eternity, we ourselves *must* follow them; for, *It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.* And who among us can tell what it is to die? We may have seen many instances of mortality; and some, perhaps, around whose beds we have stood in that awful hour, have told us with their last expiring breath, what a great work it was: but we shall never be fully apprised of the import of the word *death*, till we die ourselves. That we shall die, and that it is an important thing, is readily granted by us all: but then how little is it most, if not all, into whose hands these pages will come, it is needless to introduce them here.

felt!

felt! how little are we actuated by it! how unprepared for its approach! all which proves we are not living under an abiding sense of our *own* mortality. Again, we not only must die; but we may die *soon*. Our being young or healthy provides us with no sure defence against the king of terrors, who commits his depredations as often upon the strong and the young, as upon the enfeebled man of hoary hairs. We know not but the sentence is gone forth, and that there are now but a few *weeks*, or *days*, or it may be only *hours*, ere we shall be numbered with the dead, and the place that now knows us shall know us no more for ever. How profitable would it be for us, if we could attend to the concerns of this life, the ordinances of God's house, and all the duties of religion, under the impression of this interesting thought, that *time is short*, and that death and eternity are just at the door! Let it likewise be remembered, we not only may die *soon*, but we may die *suddenly*. Death is not always introduced by a painful or lingering sickness, which is a kind of preparatory admonition to prepare to meet our God; but sometimes it comes unobserved and unthought of, and executes his commission in a moment, without giving the person time sufficient to say, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* How numerous are instances of this kind! and yet how difficult do we find it to realise its probability,

bility, in our own case ! Are we not rather living in a kind of security ; either amusing ourselves with vain projects for the obtaining earthly blifs, or weeping in a kind of despondency, under the apprehension of future ills ? when, lo ! death enters ; and his appearance leads us to *feel* what we ought to have felt long before : namely, that all our earthly blifs is vanity and vexation of spirit ; and that all our pains and griefs are scarce worth a thought, when compared with eternal objects. If these things are so, then we ought, with Paul, to be able to say, that we die daily ; in doing which, we should die more to the world and sin, and live unto God with more full purpose of heart.

Lastly, Let it be observed, that as death leaves us, judgment will find us. Therefore, *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might ; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest.* If we die unconverted, unbelieving sinners, *without Christ ; having no hope, and without God in the world ;* we shall be found such in the morning of the resurrection, and appear in that state before the awful tribunal of the Lord Jehovah. How needful is it then that we should examine ourselves, and enquire how matters stand between God and
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our souls! Suppose God should call for us this day, this hour, are we ready? could we welcome the message?——or rather, would not our hearts be overwhelmed with guilt and fear? What would be our portion? Should we be received into mansions of glory, or be cast into utter darkness? We should do well to remember, that names and forms in religion avail nothing in the hour of dissolution and the day of judgment: then it will appear, that every thing in religion which came short of repentance toward God, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Ghost, together with those fruits of righteousness which naturally flow from them, was of little or no value; and that they who were contented without these, had the form of godliness, but knew nothing of its saving power.

Having spoken something of death in a general way, I shall proceed to improve it farther, in a more particular one, by addressing two or three different classes of hearers: and,

I. It is not improbable but I am speaking to some to-day (I hope the number is small) who are strengthening their hands in wickedness, by cherishing a willing forgetfulness of death; or, what has the same effect, placing it at a very great distance. They have, as it were, made a covenant

nant with death, and are therefore rioting in sin and pleasure. But such should remember, that their laboured forgetfulness of it does not lessen its importance, nor retard its approach. Shut thine eyes, sinner, if thou wilt, and be determined not to see, or observe, the ravage death is making round about thee in one instance and another; and so refuse to hear the preachers of thine own mortality: but know this, thou canst not escape it, nor yet conquer it. It may be, thou art resolutely bent on persevering in the vulgar and sensual, or in the more polite and refined pleasures of the world, and art therefore saying to thy soul, *Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry;* and all this with an intention to stupefy conscience, and secure thyself against those gloomy thoughts which arise in the prospect of death and eternity: but be assured of this, all ye that are lovers of pleasure more than of God, that the remedy to which ye have recourse, contains no effectual antidote against the evil of which we are now speaking. No: the hour of your dissolution is hastening, with inexpressible speed, on the wings of fleeting time; and when death is arrived, you may think to treat it with the same indifference you have done in time past; but you will then perceive that there is an unspeakable difference, between viewing it near, and at a distance. Then the scene will be changed: Conscience, that had either been bribed,

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or forced into silence, will neither sleep in quiet, nor cease its clamours any longer: but, in spite of all thy feeble efforts to the contrary, will speak, yea, speak louder than thunder itself. Conscience will bring to thy recollection, those works of darkness, and scenes of wickedness, which thou thoughtest were buried in everlasting oblivion; and re-preach the terrors of the law, and all those threatenings of eternal truth, which God's ministers have so often set before you. It will aggravate thy guilt in the remembrance of that goodness and mercy which thou hast trodden under foot, with so much scorn and contempt; and, reminding thee of the mercies, judgments, and ordinances, with which thou hast been favoured above thousands, will tell thee, *That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee.* Being freed from the noise and tumult of the world, conscience will have an opportunity of not only telling thee, that God is coming to judge the world in righteousness, but will discover to thee, something of the miserable estate of those who fall under Jehovah's righteous displeasure; that, *In hell they lift up their eyes, being in torments*—Luke xvi. 22—and that their sorrow is remediless, unmixed, incessant, and eternal; for there, *Their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*—Mark ix. 44—but *the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever*—Rev. xiv. 11.—If this be the end and
portion

portion of the finally impenitent sinner ; with how much assiduity and zeal should we labour, by the terrors of the Lord to persuade men ! But, sinner, thou art not called to listen to the voice of terror alone, but also to that of mercy : and we rejoice in one opportunity more, of telling thee, that the door of hope is still open ; that God is waiting that he may be gracious ; and this day proclaims himself, *The Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin*—Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. —O that careless sinners, who are forgetting God, salvation, and eternity, might this day be made wise ; and, in the consideration of their latter end, be enabled to *behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world !* For, *Behold, now is the accepted time ; behold, now is the day of salvation !* Still, still does the glorious gospel of the grace of God continue to proclaim, *Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.* Thou mayest have sinned much, and sinned long ; but God authorises his ministers to tell thee, *that he hath no delight in the death of a sinner ;* but hath given his Son Jesus Christ to save such. Yes, Christ hath magnified the law, and made it honourable—Isaiah xlii. 21.—He hath offered up himself a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice ; he hath brought in a righteousness adequate to the demands of the law, and the purity of the divine nature—

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Dan. ix. 24—in consequence of all which, he is reported to be the Saviour of the chief of finners; yea, to be able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him. Come then, guilty sinner; no longer *spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not*; but make Christ thy hope, thy refuge, and thy strength; and then, when death shall come, instead of being armed with terror, he shall be to thy soul the messenger of peace and glory.

II. But I am addressing some characters to-day, of a different complexion to those already mentioned; who, instead of banishing the thoughts of death, are often thinking of it, and have no objection to think it may come soon, or even suddenly; and that because they are not afraid of its approach, nor do they see any cause to be alarmed at it, come when it will, and how it will, whether by progressive or by more hasty steps; they think and say, they shall meet it with courage and composure. All this would be well; and one should rejoice to see the soul thus easy and tranquil, in the prospect of so awful an hour, if it was but the result of a scriptural and well-grounded confidence in the Lord Jesus Christ, who took on him our nature, that he might destroy death, and him that had the power of it. But this is not always the case with those who use this language; seeing it

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often arises from gross ignorance, and carnal security, rather than from any knowledge of, or faith in, the Redeemer of lost sinners. Let me therefore intreat you to examine the ground of this your confidence, lest you should be deceived in a matter of such infinite moment.

What! are you comparing yourself with such as you fancy are worse than you, and then adapting the vain and audacious boasting of the Pharisee, *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men?* Vain man! what, if you have not through education and connexion, or something of that kind, run to the same excess in outward wickedness, as many others; nay more, even allowing that you are the very best of all the human race; yet you are, before God, a guilty, condemned sinner, and have committed sin sufficient to deserve the wrath of God, and to arm death with ten thousand terrors. But it may be you are not resting alone on your not having been so bad as other men, but have to boast, that you have done more good: your heart was always, in your esteem, *very good*; and therefore you always loved, feared, and served God: you have regularly attended upon religious ordinances, and done innumerable acts of kindness and benevolence to your fellow-creatures. All this may be true, and is very well in its place: but then hear, hear what the Scripture saith—*If thou be righteous, what givest thou him, or what receiveth*

he of thine hand? Job xxxv. 7. *When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do*—Luke xvii. 10. So that there is nothing of our own that will make an atonement for sin, or merit the favour and love of God to our souls. See the truth of this in a passage of Scripture that well exhibits thy character and case: *But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained the law of righteousness: wherefore? because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law*—Rom. ix. 31, 32. Let their fatal mistake be a lesson of instruction to thee; and instead of imitating them, follow the Apostle Paul, who well understood the way of acceptance with God, and speaks thus: *What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ: yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*—Phil. iii. 7, 8, 9. He speaks to the same purpose Gal. ii. 16. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ; even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith*

of Christ, and not by the works of the law ; for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. There are others in the religious world, who seem to possess the same confidence, and though upon different, yet upon no better grounds : they do not appear to depend upon their own fancied goodness, like the Pharisees of whom we have been speaking ; but they are talking of salvation by grace, and redemption by the blood of the Lamb : but then, while they are doing this, they are speaking of truths which have never reached their hearts with power ; for they appear to be puffed up with a vain mind ; what they call faith is nothing but fancy ; and what they call assurance is downright presumption. And we are warranted to say this, because they have none of that faith which purifies the heart, and works by love. Their tempers and conduct loudly proclaim, they are destitute of the powerful and saving influence of true godliness in their hearts ; for while they are talking of liberty, they are the servants of unrighteousness, and consequently must be deceived.

But to conclude this head, though this is too true of some, let it be noticed, we do not mean to deny the doctrine of *Christian assurance*. We know that the religion of Jesus Christ can, and does afford this happy experience to many. Paul could say, *We know that if the earthly house of this*
tabernacle

abernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. And therefore it is we are exhorted to give all diligence, to make our calling and election sure. And we have no reason to doubt, but what the grace and Spirit of God did for Christians of old, he can do for us: nor ought we to be contented with any thing less than his sealing us, and bearing witness with our spirits that we are the children of God.

III. Though I have dwelt long upon the subject of death, I know not how to dismiss it, without saying a few words to those who are all their life-time subject to bondage, through the fear of it. Now though the fear of death be painful to all, yet it arises from a different source in one heart, to what it does in another. In some Christians, it is a fear of those pains and sufferings which sometimes attend death: in others, it is on account of those near and relative ties which must then be broken: but, in the greater number, we think it is on account of that great and awful decision which must then take place; for, in proportion as we are doubting and questioning the safety of our state, in that same proportion we shall be subject to the cruel and tormenting fear of death. But, Christian, why should thy soul be bowed down, and thus disquieted within thee, when the Scriptures are shewing thee death through a medium,

dium, that will not only disarm it of its terrific appearance, but even render it pleasant and desirable? for Christ hath removed its poison, and taken away its sting. So that now, for the Christian to die, is to fall *asleep in Jesus*; it is a resting from his labours; yea, it is only departing from a barren, desolate wilderness, abounding with every ill, to a country of inexpressible beauty and delight, where there is no night, sorrow, sickness, or death. It is true, the passage is narrow, and sometimes rough and dark: but remember, He whose watchful eyes *are ever over the righteous* will guide thy steps, and afford thee his supporting and comforting presence. It was in the prospect and certainty of this that David exulted, *Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no ill; for thou art with me.* Yea, it is this that refreshes the soul through all the wearisome toils of life; it is this that warms the heart in the cold chilling night of death: from all which it appears to be the privilege of the Christian, to fear death as little as the weary traveller does the slumbers of the night. The impropriety of a Christian's fearing death, is not only seen by what God's Word says of it; but likewise from the *actual experience* of many of God's people, who have feared it much and as long as any of you to whom I am now speaking: and yet, when they have come to the trying hour, their fears have been dispelled, their souls have been all joy and light in the Lord; and, instead of

of dreading it as they thought they should, they have had such happy prospects and foretastes of glory, as to fill their souls with longing desire to obtain it. Thus we see the Lord fulfilling his word—*As is thy day, so shall thy strength be.* We may further observe, that a Christian's fear of death is not only reprov'd by the Scriptures, and Christian experience, but also by the dealings of God with him. Let him remember how many difficulties he hath been brought through, in which unbelief said he would faint. Christian, look back to the way by which the Lord hath brought you, and see how many *Ebenezers, stones of help*, you have been constrained to erect, as so many mementos of the Lord's goodness: and what are all these, but so many encouragements to believe and trust in God for the time to come, and confidently to assure thyself, that when *thy heart and flesh fail, God will be the strength of thy heart, and thy portion for ever?* But to conclude, let it be observed, there is great need for Christians to be careful they do not lay a just foundation for this fear; which is often done by the indulgence of besetting sins, living at a distance from God, and neglecting the means of grace; all which have proved thorns in the pillows of dying Christians.

Secondly, We are to improve this subject in respect of those relative characters this Great Man sustained. He was a Husband, a Father, a Friend,

Friend, and a Minister ; nor can any tell how valuable he was in all these, but those who have sustained the loss. Such of us as fill up any of these relations in life, and who know the felicity of such near and social connexions, cannot but commiserate with those upon whom this awful providence hath made such a solemn and affecting breach. This is one of those mediums, through which we cannot but look at death with a measure of disgust and dread. The affectionate partner, the tender offspring, the bosom friend: to think that all these, though fastened to our hearts by a thousand endearing ties, and though more pleasant and desirable to us than thousands of gold and silver ; yet are held by a very slight tenure, and subject to a very speedy removal. This is an affecting thought, and may well lead us to adapt the language of Dr. Watts,

“ Midst changing scenes, and dying friends,
 “ Be thou my all in all !”

This view of the subject instructs us in the emptiness and vanity of all our earthly comforts, when compared with *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away* ; with God as the Christian's portion ! and it reproves us, with much justice, for our too great forgetfulness and neglect of the one, and our undue attachment to the other. How does all this instruct us in the importance

importance of religion in general, and the indispensable necessity of our being intimately and experimentally acquainted with it ! If our earthly cisterns are so liable to be dried up, we stand the more in need of spiritual consolations and divine supports : and these the religion of Jesus Christ can happily impart ; and such is their virtue when imparted, that they sweeten the bitterest cup, and lighten the weight of the heaviest cross ; enabling us to say, when stript of our dearest earthly comforts, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord !*

But once more, we are to recollect, that this providence hath not only made an inroad upon the private circles of life, in taking away an affectionate husband, a tender parent, and a much-esteemed friend ; but likewise we have to lament the removal of a minister, one placed in a large sphere of action, in which he was highly respected and eminently useful ; and that, not when worn out with age, but in the prime of life, and in the midst of his usefulness. With what a voice does this providence speak to you, my dear hearers, who have been repeatedly favoured with the privilege of hearing him preach the terrors of the Law, and the kind invitations of the Gospel ! But now you will hear him no more for ever. Have his labours had any effect upon your hearts ? or are you still in a

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state of sin, and at a distance from God? But if it speaks to you, it speaks still louder to me, and to ministers in general. We are apt to forget that we stand in jeopardy every hour, and know not but each sermon we preach may be our last. O that ministers did but live more under the influence of this solemn thought! Then, how concerned should we be to have precious souls for our hire, and to be ready to give an account of our stewardship! We should not therefore be so careful to spare ourselves, but rather to spend our time and strength for the salvation of immortal souls. We should not entertain our hearers with dry speculations in religion, nor try to please them with the charms of oratory; but, considering ourselves as dying men preaching to dying sinners, and knowing that, if their souls perish through our inattention, *their blood will be required at our hand*, Ezekiel iii. 18. we should be constantly shewing them their miserable estate as sinners, and directing them to Jesus as *the way, the truth, and the life*; and by our plain, faithful, and importunate manner of addressing them, we should give them some proof, that we are none of those hirelings who care not whether they are saved or lost, but that our *hearts' desire and prayer to God is, that they may be saved*.

As a Minister, the societies among which he laboured either statedly or occasionally, have sustained an unspeakable loss, and feel themselves deeply affected with it; and indeed justly, when they consider with how much pleasure and profit they have attended his ministrations. But, grievous as it may be to them, and the churches in general, who must feel for the removal of such a man; yet these providences are counterbalanced by two considerations.

1. That the strength and prosperity of the Church does not depend on ministers, but on Christ himself, who is ever with and near his people. Pleasing thought! that Christ, the Captain of our Salvation, who is to lead the armies of Israel through this wilderness, is with us always, and is *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. This truth contains a powerful argument against excessive grief and sinful murmuring, which are too often indulged when God takes away useful ministers.

2. It is a comfortable consideration, that the same God, who by his providence takes away one, can and does raise up others. It is but for him to speak, and *great shall be the company of those who publish the word*, Psalm lxviii. 11. The folly of those mournful conclusions which some Christians draw upon such occasions, was remarkably seen

on the death of that truly eminent man, Mr. George Whitfield; when those who loved Zion, and desired her prosperity, exclaimed, *O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!* But let us walk about Zion, tell the towers thereof, and mark well her bulwarks; and we shall be constrained to say, *What hath God wrought!* Has not the Lord raised up many useful instruments of various denominations, and are not truth and righteousness flourishing in our borders? Yes, my brethren, this is the case. Well, then, let this providence lead us to *pray the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest*, and to pour down a double portion of his Spirit upon those already sent.

We shall conclude with a few general inferences from the whole.

1. Such providences as these help to shew something of the evil of sin, which is the parent of all the misery to which we are liable, either in this world or that which is to come. Death, and all the terror with which it is armed, entered into the world by sin; and it still continues to be the scourge of mankind, the destroyer of domestic peace, and the plague of Christian societies. Yet it is esteemed by many a very little thing; *yea, fools make a mock at sin*; thinking that God either does not notice it, or that a few of their good deeds

deeds will counterbalance all its demerit. These persons are willingly ignorant of what God hath done to angels on account of sin, 2 Pet. ii. 4. and what Christ endured on the cross for it, Isa. liii. 4, 5. But the serious and enlightened mind has had its enormities discovered to him in such a point of view, as to desire above all things to be delivered from its curse, guilt, pollution, and power; well knowing that it is the cause of all the evil in this world; and of eternal death in the world to come, if not pardoned by the blood of Christ, and subdued by the power of divine grace.

2. The subject we have been discoursing upon should lead us highly to esteem the Gospel dispensation, in which the abounding grace of God is revealed to sinners by a Redeemer, the dignity of whose person, and the efficacy of whose atonement, opens an effectual door of hope to guilty sinners; for *the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth from all sin*. What a word is this, to the soul mourning under a deep sense of the number and aggravations of its sins! It is a declaration that may well silence all his fear, and fill him with joy and peace in believing; and there is nothing that will make a man happy in life, and reconcile him to death, but this—Psalm xxxii. 1, 2.

3. From

3. From this subject it may be inferred, what a dreadful and deplorable state the wicked and ungodly are in; liable to pain, sickness, and death; without the knowledge of God, the pardon of sin, or the renewal of their hearts; and so without any thing to comfort them, in the prospect of these things, or in the actual experience of them. And yet, while in this state, they are not only without these blessings, but feel no want of them; and, though in a state of sin and condemnation, are crying Peace, peace, when God hath never spoken it; nay, in direct opposition to his word, which assures us, that without faith, repentance, and regeneration, the soul shall never enter his kingdom. How earnest and faithful should ministers be in warning these characters! How can we but lament over them in the language of Moses, *O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!* an end that there is reason to fear will be without honour, and without peace. Once more, sinner, thou art warned; God is still saying to thee in his word, *Turn and live; why will ye die? Come, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.* O sinner! no longer shut thine ear to these kind admonitions; no longer despise the riches of his goodness. Now hear, and your soul shall live; do
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not reject the voice of mercy ; no, not this once ; for if you do, you know not but it may be for ever, for ever too late, and thou mayest at last hear God say, *Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear cometh : when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you, then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me ; for that they hated knowledge, and did not chuse the fear of the Lord.*—Prov. i. 24—29.

4. and Lastly, Though such providences are very solemn and affecting, yet they wear a favourable aspect towards the Christian. It is true, he is to die as well as other men : but death to him is a conquered adversary ; he hath no need to fear it ; to him it will be eternal gain. Though dear relatives, and much-esteemed friends, we must shortly part ; yet religion shews us a happy futurity where we shall meet again, to spend a blissful eternity in his *presence, where there is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore.* With this thought, we can attend our dearest friends to the grave ; look
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in and smile, with a degree of pleasure, in the recollection that Jesus will be the guardian of their sleeping dust, and again restore them from the lonesome tomb. In the view, and under the happy influence, of these things, Christians in every age, when called to die, have bid a willing farewell to earth; and, as they have passed Jordan to the promised land, shouted Victory, victory through the blood of the Lamb! May your last end, and mine, be like theirs, for the dear Redeemer's sake! Amen.

THE END.